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SUBJECT: CUBA HUMAN RIGHTS ROUNDUP

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Classified By: COM Michael Parmly for Reason 1.4(d).

11. (C) Summary: With Internet advocate Guillermo Farinas up to Day 128 of his hunger strike, 38 supporters have announced a sympathy fast. Oswaldo Paya of Varela Project fame is summarizing his "Program for All Cubans" in a pamphlet. Paya is also collecting evidence on bogus pro-democracy activists who he says frequently end up reaching the United States as refugees. Some "Ladies in White" were ordered to strip naked before or after visiting their jailed relatives. Angel Pablo Polanco of the Pro-Change Committee says his group is identifying local-government leaders, to prevent them from some day playing a role in a democratic Cuban Government. Independent journalist Armando Betancourt is detained and accused of public disorder for trying to report on an attempted eviction in Camaguey. In Matanzas, State Security broke up a 14-person meeting of the opposition Marti Revolutionary Party and detained all participants for 72 hours. Activists say the GOC is covering up the true death toll from May's torrential rains and flooding. End Summary.

SYMPATHY FAST FOR FARINAS

12. (C) Thirty-eight supporters of hunger-striking dissident Guillermo Farinas are taking part in a sympathy fast. Among the participants are members of the Martha Abreu Women's Movement, including Farinas' common-law wife, Noelia Pedraza Jimenez. Another sympathy faster is Juan Carlos Gonzalez Leiva, a well-known blind dissident from Ciego de Avila. Ten of the 38 intend to fast for 24 hours or less. Farinas, now up to Day 128 of his hunger strike for Internet access, is being sustained with IV fluids at a Santa Clara hospital. On June 3 or 4, he underwent a third operation to remove coagulated blood from one of his lungs. Leading activist Martha Beatriz Roque of the Assembly to Promote Civil Society continues to call attention to Farinas' case. On June 5, she told us that a number of Assembly members are among the 38 carrying out the sympathy fast. Roque said Farinas' mother Alicia Hernandez, with whom she speaks regularly, is cooperating with State Security. Roque warned that Hernandez would be pressing the USG to provide refuge to Farinas. (Note: Hernandez has not yet made any such appeal. End Note.)

PAYA FOCUSES ON BOGUS ACTIVISTS

13. (C) Paya told us June 1 that he and his colleagues are summarizing into a 16-page pamphlet the "Program for All Cubans," their plan for a peaceful transition to democracy, including a draft Constitution. Separately, he said, his

network is collecting evidence on bogus activists who apply as, and frequently qualify for, refugees to the U.S. Paya said some such "activists" use the name of Paya's Christian Liberation Movement (MCL) in crafting fake letters, false police citations and other materials to bolster refugee cases. Paya said he suspects considerable State Security involvement, noting that such activity could generate profits, create bad blood among activists and perhaps help the GOC place agents in Miami. "We are close to identifying some unscrupulous people," he added. (Note: Veteran activist Roberto de Miranda told COM June 6 that "in Cienfuegos, there's a big business churning out fake prison-sentence letters, bogus police citations" and other materials to support migration cases. End Note.)

HARASSMENT OF MCL MEMBERS CONTINUES

14. (C) Paya, like Roque, has not been targeted for recent, intense harassment, but a number of his colleagues have. In late May in the southern city of Palma Soriano, Communist militants held an "act of repudiation" aimed at Catalina Pina, a MCL member who facilitates phone calls to political prisoners. Another Paya-affiliated activist, Jorge Aguilera, was warned by a Bayamo court on May 31 that he may be charged with "dangerousness," unless he finds a job. Aguilera was fired after his dissident activities came to light.

"LADIES IN WHITE" ORDERED TO DISROBE

15. (C) Clara Lourdes Prieto Llorente, a member of the "Ladies in White" and the sister of political prisoner Fabio Prieto Llorente, told us June 5 that she has created a new opposition political group, the Pines Autonomous Party. Based in Nueva Gerona, on the Isle of Youth (formerly known as the Isle of Pines), the party has seven members and hopes

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to attract at least 33 more, she said. Clara, an economist fired from her job, said Fabio, one of the 75 peaceful activists jailed in March 2003, is doing time at El Guayabo prison on the same island. She said he is not mistreated by guards or other prisoners, although he is grappling with emphysema, gastric woes and other health issues. Clara and a relative were strip-searched at El Guayabo on March 29, following a two-hour meeting with Fabio. Clara said the search was intended to humiliate. A similar incident occurred on May 18 at Kilo 5.5 prison in Pinar del Rio. The wife of 75er Normando Hernandez, Yarai Reyes, who is also a Lady in White, was ordered to completely disrobe and perform deep knee bends before visiting her husband. Reyes refused.

"A VERY DANGEROUS MAN"

16. (C) Clara also said her cousin, who lives in the countryside outside of Nueva Gerona, met in January with a local youth who had been recruited for military service and was serving as a prison guard at El Guayabo. The young man, aged 17, did not know of the cousin's connection to the dissident. He informed her that his supervisors had just told him that "a very dangerous man" had come to the prison and that he and the other recruits should not get close to him. The man's name was Fabio Prieto Llorente.

GROUP IDENTIFYING MUNICIPALITY LEADERS

17. (C) Angel Pablo Polanco, head of the dissident Pro-Change Committee, which advocates replacing the current Constitution with a modified version of the 1940 Constitution, told us June 5 that his network is working on identifying key individuals in power in all of Havana's 15 municipalities. "We're identifying the chief of each municipality's Poder

Popular, education office and public health office," Polanco said. "We can't allow people who take part in repressive activities to hold any position in a new, free, democratic Cuban Government." Among the changes that Polanco would like to see made to the 1940 Constitution is the scrapping of its ban on capital punishment. He said the death penalty is merited for "any Cuban official found, in a fair court of law, to have taken part in the more than 500 executions that have occurred since the revolution." In Polanco's vision of a peaceful transition, a provisional government would consist of eight key leaders - four chosen from on-island pro-democracy groups, and four from the Cuban exile community. These eight would in turn select a provisional president. Polanco envisions only two realistic contenders: Martha Beatriz Roque, and Dr. Oscar Biscet of the Lawton Human Rights Foundation.

JOURNALIST DETAINED

18. (C) Independent journalist Armando Betancourt is reportedly being held at a police station in Camaguey, central Cuba, after he tried to report on a May 23 attempted eviction of several families in the city's La Guernica neighborhood. The families were living in unauthorized houses they had built on land previously used as a trash dump. A large group of police officers was unable to evict the families because of the presence of numerous protestors, some armed with machetes. However, the police took Betancourt into detention and accused him of public disorder. (Note: The Norwegian Charge d'Affaires noted his country's keen interest in the case during a meeting with the COM. End note.)

DISSIDENT GATHERING RAIDED

19. (C) Jorge Luis Cruz Arencibia, president of the opposition Marti Revolutionary Party, told us June 6 that State Security officers in the Matanzas city of Jaguey Grande raided his home on May 20, shortly after the start of a dissident gathering. Cruz said all 14 participants were taken into custody and held for 72 hours before being released.

GOC SAID TO BE COVERING UP DEATH TOLL FROM FLOODS

110. (C) The GOC statistic on the number of deaths caused by May's torrential rains and flooding is far lower than the true number, according to freed political prisoner Edel Jose Garcia Diaz and dissident doctor Darsi Ferrer. Garcia, a 75er freed in 2004, told us June 5 that 20 or 21 people are believed to have died, rather than the GOC's figure of seven.

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Garcia explained that when the Quibu river overflowed, "A number of houses were simply dragged away." Ferrer told us June 4 that the GOC is covering up the true death toll to prevent any popular expressions of discontent over the GOC's flood response. Ferrer also expressed outrage over the treatment of multiple sclerosis (MS) sufferers, an issue he and his colleagues have been researching. Ferrer said foreigners with MS who seek medical treatment in Cuba receive injections of Interferon B, at a cost of thousands of dollars. However, he said the more than 3,000 Cubans with MS are given the less-expensive and far-less-effective Interferon A, with the result that "their quality of life suffers."

PARMLY